

Leary Governmental Affairs Consultants, Inc.

Philip L. Leary, AICP



1821 Carr Street. ♦ Palatka, FL 32177

386-937-7829

pleary@LearyGAC.com www.LearyGAC.com

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FAPG Legislative Update

This week I attended the first interim committee meetings of the new year, that include five that will take place leading up to the March 3rd start of the 2015 legislative session. Both the House Ag & Natural Resources Policy and Appropriations Committee's met this week with presentations to the committee on the current status of Florida's Water Supply and Future Water Use Projections by Drew Bartlett, DEP Deputy Secretary and Rich Budell, DACS Director of the Office of Ag Water Policy in the Policy subcommittee and a base budget presentation by committee staff in the Appropriations subcommittee.

This was a precursor in the House for the proposed committee bill (PCB) forthcoming that will revise and update state water policy. Water policy legislation has been designated by Speaker Crusafulli as a priority for his administration in the 2015 legislature. Based on last sessions omnibus "springs legislation", that passed the Senate but was never heard in the House, groundwater supply issues in most of the state, surface water quality issues specifically in South Florida, I predict the Water Policy bill will be a complicated and controversial piece of legislation with many moving parts.

The Senate Environmental preservation Committee met to hear a presentation by committee staff and discuss implementation of Amendment 1, also known as the "Florida Water and Land Legacy" constitutional amendment, which was approved by voters in the November elections. The measure requires the state to dedicate a portion of real-estate tax revenue, by some estimates \$10 billion over 20 years, to land and water projects. Senate President Andy Gardiner supports using a five-year plan, similar to one that the state uses to fund transportation projects, but House Speaker Steve Crisafulli has seemed ambivalent toward the idea. Many legislators and lobbyists would like to see a portion of the funding support water supply and quality projects and BMP implementation, but environmental groups want 100% of the funds to go to land acquisition and conservation.

It now appears fairly clear that the Senate will take the lead on Amendment 1 implementation legislation and the House on State Water Policy.

And in an issue brought to light this summer by FAPG past-president Helen Hickman, on the CCNA and Chapter 287 F.S. not including PG's, it will be a priority for changing the statute and eventually a rule change, for me and the Association this session. Adding PG's to the qualified professionals in Chapter 287 and the CCNA only makes sense, especially considering that legislation we passed two sessions ago established PG's as design professionals in Chapter 550.

I look forward to again representing FAPG in the upcoming interim committee weeks and legislative session, and please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or need additional information.

